

# Neighbourhood Support New Zealand



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## Neighbourhood Support Fact Sheet

### Checking if a vehicle is stolen

When you buy a vehicle from a private seller, be careful to look out for signs that the car is stolen or the seller is not the true owner of the vehicle.

Here are some tips on how to avoid buying a stolen car:

- If the deal seems too good to be true or the price too cheap, be suspicious. Criminals selling stolen vehicles make the sale attractive to prevent questions being asked and to move the property fast.
- Be cautious when dealing with a seller who only provides a mobile phone number.
- When telephoning the seller, do not describe the vehicle but say you are enquiring about the vehicle advertised for sale. Be cautious where the seller is a private individual and indicates having more than one vehicle for sale.
- **Do not** deal with a seller at the side of the road. Always confirm an address.
- Go to where the vehicle is on sale rather than have the person bring the vehicle to you. A dishonest seller is unlikely to allow a prospective purchaser to visit a home address.
- Keep a lookout for signs of casual car dealing or rebuilding, such as other vehicles present in various states of repair, or parts scattered around in garages and driveways.
- When at the address where the vehicle is, try to work out if the seller actually lives there.
- Ensure the vehicle colour matches with LTSA ([Land Transport Safety Authority](http://www.nzta.govt.nz)) records. If the seller claims it has been repainted, check behind door rubbers for the original colour. If the vehicle colour is not correct, this may indicate a stolen vehicle with a false identity.
- Make sure you know where to find the engine and chassis numbers, and check for signs of any interference or alteration. Any imperfections may indicate an attempt to conceal the vehicle's correct identity. Check that the numbers match those on the registration papers but be aware that those numbers may not belong on the car. A criminal wants you to make the match and be happy. Check the registration papers for any sign of alteration.
- If the seller does not have the registration papers, ask why, and always ask for personal identification.
- Always obtain a receipt! Ensure the receipt is detailed, showing name, address, date and description of vehicle. Include VIN (Vehicle Identification Number), chassis number and engine number, sale price and signature of seller.
- When registration papers are unavailable, you can get current records by completing an information request form and paying a small fee at any New Zealand Post shop.
- If the vehicle is subject to Road User Charges, make sure that the RUC licence is paid up to the odometer / hubodometer reading at the time of purchase, as you will become liable for arrears. If you cannot sight the current RUC licence, contact the RUC Helpdesk on 0800 655 644.

- Check that there is no [money owing](#) on the vehicle or a security interest registered over it, so the vehicle can not be taken from you.
- For \$2.25 (incl. GST) you can apply to have an [LTSA agent](#) check that a vehicle is not reported stolen, and is properly registered and licensed. If the vehicle is stolen, advise the Police immediately. The Automobile Association, New Zealand Post Limited, Vehicle Testing New Zealand, Vehicle Inspection New Zealand Limited and On Road New Zealand are LTSA agents along with other independent outlets displaying the LTSA logo.
- It is a serious crime to knowingly purchase a stolen vehicle or stolen vehicle parts. Even if you purchase a stolen vehicle or part unwittingly, the rightful owner will be able to take it back from you.
- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs provides more comprehensive information on [buying a motor vehicle](#), including an explanation of the Motor Vehicle Sales Act 2003 requiring licensed motor vehicle dealers and other traders who sell motor vehicles to be registered. The Act also established the Motor Vehicles Disputes Tribunal to deal with [problems involving vehicle traders](#).
- See the Fact Sheet on [Protecting Your Vehicle](#)